

# gobar times

Issue no. 271, December 1–31, 2024

A DOWN TO EARTH SUPPLEMENT FOR THE YOUNG AND CURIOUS

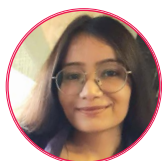


## THE YEAR IN REVIEW!

A year-end roundup of the coolest  
cover stories—from green wins to eco  
worries, all in just one power-packed  
edition!

## LETTER TO THE READERS

# A YEAR OF CURIOSITY AND CHANGE



**Yashita Mishra**

**H**ey Gobarites!  
Or if any of you  
take offense to  
that, Hello Young

Environmentalists! As we look back on the past year, we are reminded of the fascinating journey we have had together. From learning about the unsung child waste pickers who make our cities cleaner to uncovering the intelligent behaviours of migrating birds, and diving into the thoughtful ecological beliefs of indigenous tribes, this year has been full of insights and discoveries. These stories have opened our eyes to the world around us and, we hope, inspired you to think deeply about our planet and the role you can play in its conservation. Let us look back at these incredible tales and the lessons they have taught us!

### Marvels of the Wild

Imagine a black panther slipping silently through the jungle, its sleek coat blending seamlessly with the shadows. This deep, dark colour comes from melanin, the same pigment that gives us humans our skin tone. But melanin does more than just colour—it helps animals like leopards, jaguars, and even moths survive. Our February 2024 cover story, [Wildlife of Black and White](#), introduced us to melanism, the phenomenon that gives these animals their striking black coats, allowing them to blend into their environment. Some animals are even born with albinism or leucism, making them appear ghostly white! These stunning colour adaptations remind us how

brilliantly evolution works in the wild.

Later in the year, in October's [Flights of Longings](#), we learned that every winter, the skies come alive as migratory birds embark on awe-inspiring journeys spanning thousands of kilometres. Guided by instincts honed over millennia, species like the Bar-headed Goose and Demoiselle Crane brave high altitudes, vast deserts, and unpredictable weather to find food and nesting grounds.

### Nature's Partnerships: Humans and Wildlife

In May and July, we explored how humans and wildlife can live together in beautiful balance. May brought us [The Bees, The Bears, and the Kattunayakans](#), and we learned about the eco-conscious practices of the Kattunayakans, or "Lords of the Jungle" who honour a sacred pact with bees, bears, and trees to collect pure, wild honey sustainably. With rituals, respect, and promises not to harm, they gather honey, leaving wax for bears and

took us deep into the forests of Wayanad, where the Mullukurumba tribe shared their wisdom about living harmoniously with wildlife. When children discover a "magic mound," elder Veliyamuthan reveals its secret—a massive python digesting its meal. He shares the tribe's unique practice of extracting medicinal fat from pythons without harm, using bamboo tools. This method not only aids the python but also showcases the tribe's respect for wildlife. Veliyamuthan's tale, laced with wisdom and humour, highlight the symbiotic relationship between the Mullukurumbas and their environment, leaving us marvelling at nature's wonders.



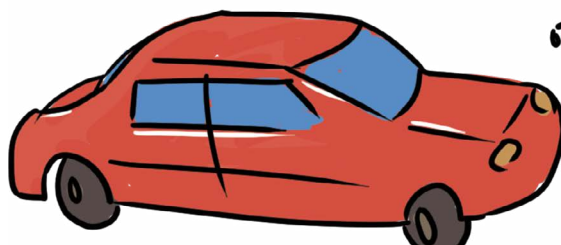
Birds rely on Earth's magnetic field, celestial cues, and even smells to navigate. Their unique physiology, like oxygen-efficient lungs and powerful hearts, makes such voyages possible. Yet threats like habitat loss and climate change jeopardize these journeys. We must strive to protect the migratory birds if we want to keep this natural spectacle alive.

preserving hives for bees. Their honey, named *The Third Share*, reflects their ethos—nature gets the first share, they keep the second, and only the third is sold. Amid warnings about pesticides killing bees, Marigan's story reminds us that protecting nature ensures life thrives for all.

In July, [Pythons, the Magic Mound, and the Mullukurumba](#)

### Awareness in Action: From Fuels to Floods

In our quest to understand today's biggest environmental challenges, we explored issues like biofuels, antibiotic resistance, and extreme weather events through stories. We learned in April's [Bio... whaa? Fuels?](#) that biofuels, made





# Cover Story

from everyday waste like farm leftovers and household scraps, are helping to turn pollution into clean energy. India's largest biofuel plant in Punjab does just that: turning 300 tons of crop waste into 33 tons of CBG daily, with bonus soil-boosting manure! With projects like these, we are not just reducing pollution, but also strengthening our ecosystem.

August brought us the tale of [Joni, Dida, and the Unforgiving Seasons](#), a heartwarming blend of past and present, exploring how nature's extremes shape

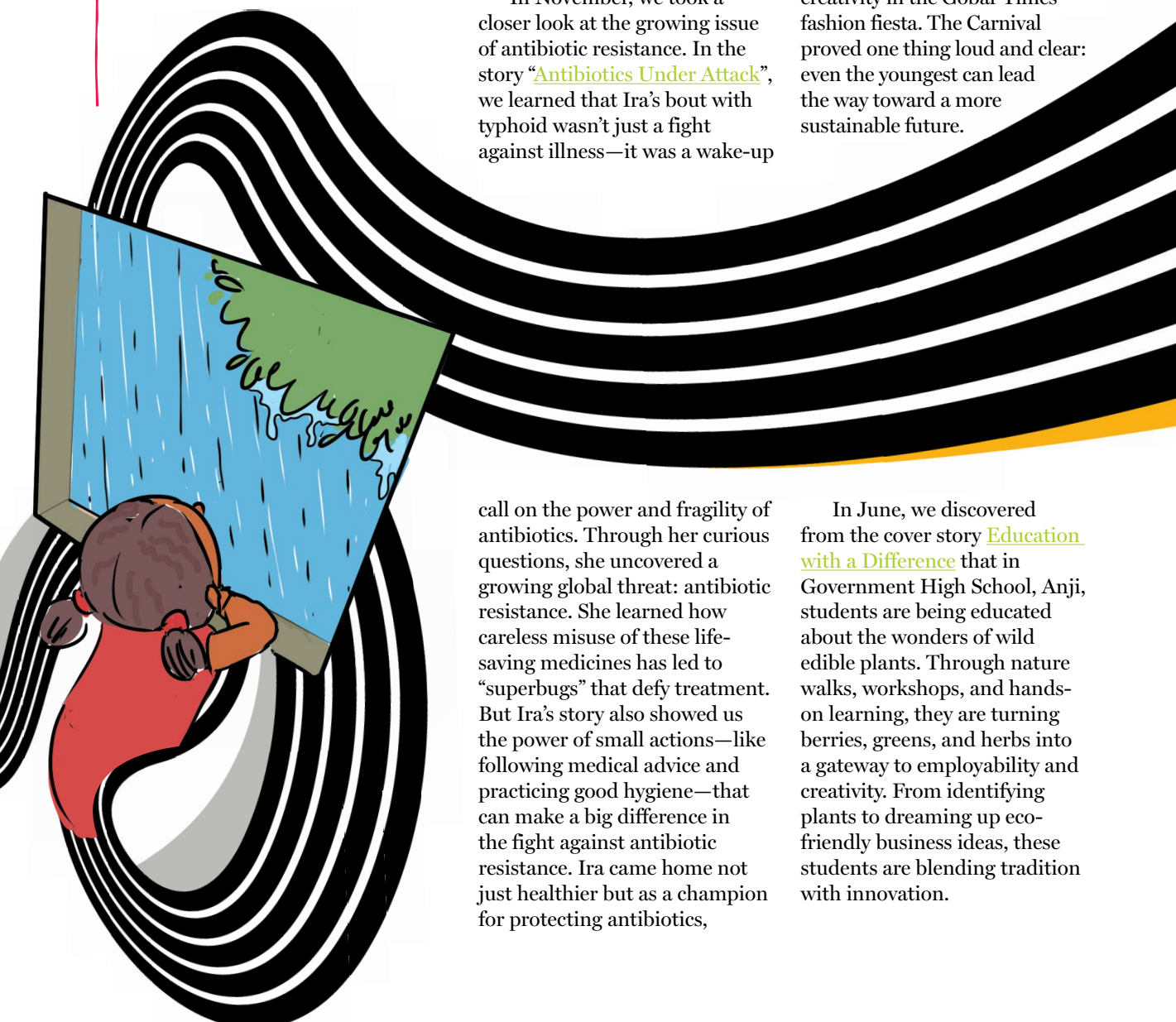
our lives. Twelve-year-old Joni battles a sweltering heatwave, longing for school, friends, and a break from sweaty nights. Her grandmother Dida, with a treasure trove of tales, shares vivid memories of rainy village days—where playful puddles turned to powerful floods, forcing her family to rebuild their lives. Joni and Dida find solace in their shared experiences and offer us a gentle reminder that while nature can be fierce, it also teaches us resilience, wonder, and the joy of cool breezes after a storm.

In November, we took a closer look at the growing issue of antibiotic resistance. In the story [“Antibiotics Under Attack”](#), we learned that Ira's bout with typhoid wasn't just a fight against illness—it was a wake-up

proving even kids can spark big change for a healthier future!

## Learning to Lead the Green Way

In 2024, we also met the schools and students who are leading the way in protecting their environment. The [March 2024 cover story of Gobar Times](#) covered the Green Schools Carnival, where we celebrated the young students and schools who are making a real difference. The day buzzed with excitement—students aced climate quizzes and showcased their eco-friendly creativity in the Gobar Times fashion fiesta. The Carnival proved one thing loud and clear: even the youngest can lead the way toward a more sustainable future.



call on the power and fragility of antibiotics. Through her curious questions, she uncovered a growing global threat: antibiotic resistance. She learned how careless misuse of these life-saving medicines has led to “superbugs” that defy treatment. But Ira's story also showed us the power of small actions—like following medical advice and practicing good hygiene—that can make a big difference in the fight against antibiotic resistance. Ira came home not just healthier but as a champion for protecting antibiotics,

In June, we discovered from the cover story [Education with a Difference](#) that in Government High School, Anji, students are being educated about the wonders of wild edible plants. Through nature walks, workshops, and hands-on learning, they are turning berries, greens, and herbs into a gateway to employability and creativity. From identifying plants to dreaming up eco-friendly business ideas, these students are blending tradition with innovation.



Tanishq's gold recycling initiatives—ads that inspire action while promoting products.

But not all is green and rosy; greenwashing lurks, where brands exaggerate their eco-efforts. As consumers, we must stay alert, reward honest efforts, and call out hollow claims. By making informed choices and supporting genuine sustainability, we can push businesses to walk the eco-talk.

As we reflect on the stories of the past year, we see that each of us has the power to make a difference. Whether it is choosing eco-friendly products, supporting green initiatives, or simply taking small steps like using less plastic and conserving water, we all play a role in shaping a more sustainable future.

We hope you have enjoyed this journey through the year, and we look forward to exploring even more stories of hope, change, and discovery with you in the year ahead. Stay curious, stay kind, and, as always, keep being the change you wish to see in the world.

*The author is a Sub-editor in the Books Publications Team, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi*

## What You Should Know

Have you ever thought about the people who clean up the waste we leave behind and the challenges they face? The January cover story shed light on these [Little Green Warriors](#). Every day, countless children across India wake up before sunrise to pick up waste from our streets and dumps. These young waste pickers, often from impoverished families, play a crucial role in recycling, but their work comes at a high cost. They face dangerous conditions, health risks, and a lack of education. By raising awareness and supporting programs

that provide education, better working conditions, and healthcare, we can help them build a brighter, healthier future.

September brought us [The Green Sheen of Advertising](#), where we learned that advertisements are evolving beyond just selling products—they're now selling planet-friendly dreams too! From raising awareness about pollution and recycling to showcasing eco-friendly innovations, companies are embracing environmental consciousness in their ads. Think IKEA's sustainable furniture campaigns or



**Sneha  
Chattopadhyaya**

## When Smog Gives You a Day Off Celebration or Suffocation?

I have been taught since I was a child about the various kinds of monsters that ruin the Earth, such as climate change and global warming, but air pollution is something that has always bothered me. It constantly makes itself known in the air we breathe and inhale.

Although I don't know how air pollution directly affects teens like me, I can't deny that it has a huge effect on the rest of the population, including us. People with pulmonary diseases, sinus issues, asthma, etc., are gravely affected, and I don't think one can simply disregard such a huge issue. Air quality in Delhi NCR and other cities jumps from poor to very poor and now it is "severe," but generally, post-Diwali, the quality deteriorates – no blue skies and clean breeze. Buildings and roads that are usually visible clearly have a veil of smog over them.

The deteriorating environment invites a sense of anxiety in me. There's a particular uncertainty about the future. I spoke with lots of my friends – some take it for granted because many haven't seen what a clean winter feels like. A major concern that comes out is, "Will there be clean enough air to breathe

without masks? Will everyone succumb to various illnesses? Will leading a normal life be possible?" Despite all this uncertainty and fear, I have a sense of hope and confidence in my generation. There are multiple organizations that look over air pollution, it's being discussed in classrooms, and awareness on this is being spread relentlessly. Media is full of such news. But what next?

I remember trips to the mountains, especially the smell of fresh air and clear skies adorned with a beautiful shade of blue. Coming back to the city is such a big disappointment to me. The air feels like it's choking me, and it's so nauseating.

What frustrates me the most is how preventable it is. If everyone was just a little bit more cooperative and thought twice before polluting the skies, the world would be a better place. As a teenager, I do what I can. I make sure to use public transport or just walk and speak up about these issues, but my efforts seem minuscule in front of the damage being done on such a large scale.

I hope one day everybody realizes that clean air is a right, not a privilege. No child should be conditioned into thinking

that if they do not wear a mask, they will be prone to life-threatening diseases. We already have the knowledge, the science, and the technology to overcome air pollution, and hopefully, in the near future, we conquer this hindrance to a beautiful life. The government should implement stricter laws regarding air pollution and work on strictly executing these laws. Hopefully, once air pollution is reduced, we all will get to breathe clean air and live without any complications and illnesses related to pollution.

To end on a funnier note, I talked to some of my friends on this topic, and while most of them shared views similar to mine, one of them had a unique perspective. She mentioned that she doesn't see air pollution as a major issue in her life because it often leads to unexpected school holidays, which she enjoys. While others might be concerned about its impact on health and the environment, she seems to view the extra time off as a silver lining to the situation. Such a humorous way to look at this!

*The author is a student of  
Class XI, Delhi Public School,  
Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.*





Chhavi Mahaur

# Junking the junk food

**How a student-led campaign against junk food transformed a school and inspired lifelong lessons in health and leadership**

**T**he Green School Project was an integral part of my school years at Father Angel School, New Delhi. As a student practitioner, we undertook various activities to make our school greener. One of the highlights was our campaign against junk food.

The school canteen operated on a private contract, and since this was the early 2000s, modern diets and mindful eating practices barely existed in schools like ours. So, the student body, along with our leaders, teachers, and principal, decided to take matters into our own hands.

We began a campaign. But how does one run a campaign against the greasiest, tastiest batch of hotdogs, chicken patties, spring rolls, chocolate éclairs, burgers, and every other irresistible treat? How does one resist the hope and thrill that each break time brought with a “freshly fried batch of junk”? We started by convincing our friends—reminding them of every time they had suffered a bad bout of diarrhoea or a throat infection caused by the stale and least nutritious food served in the middle of our school playground.

“But it’s so cheap! So tasty!” was the common response.

It took multiple rounds of talking and persuading as many peers as we could reach. But in the end, it wasn’t just the conversations that mattered. The faculty, administration, and student council devised a fun activity with a greater motive.

One fine day, the entire

school gathered in the playground to form a massive human chain spelling out, “Junk the Junk Food!” This marked the beginning of a legal campaign. The school filed a petition to voice our concerns as mindful youngsters with a simple thought: “Healthy food is a right and a necessity.”

The campaign eventually led to the complete shutdown of the canteen, leaving behind a long queue of disappointed faces who missed the tasty hotdogs and other snacks. But in my opinion? It saved us tiny humans from years of consuming junk food.

Often, taste overrides what we know deep down. Peer opinions can feel stronger than the inner voice reminding us to eat well. It’s crucial to

address both these external and internal influences. It’s even more crucial to work together to start something positive for our friends, neighborhoods, and schools.

Looking back, I can only imagine how lucky I was to be one tiny part of a huge human chain that brought meaningful change. And you know what completes the full circle? I now work with the organization that started it all. Today, I’m here to represent that organization and share this journey with you. I hope it inspires you to take similar steps and live happier, healthier lives!

*The author is a Research Associate in the Food Systems Team of the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi*





# Scary Plotter

AND THE PRISONERS OF AMR'STAN

PRESENTED BY: SUPER BUGWARTS SCHOOL OF REALITY AND MUGGLES  
IN LEAD ROLE: GRAM-POSITIVE AND GRAM-NEGATIVE MULTI-DRUG RESISTANT BACTERIA  
IN SUPPORTING ROLE: HOMO SAPIENS SAPIENS (MODERN HUMANS)

**Scary Plotter, better known as AMR (antimicrobial resistance), holds the entire human race prisoner in its almost impregnable fortress of AMR'stan. Will humanity ever manage to break free?**

**JOIN OUR FIGHT AGAINST AMR**

For details, visit: [www.cseindia.org/page/antimicrobial-reststance-programme](http://www.cseindia.org/page/antimicrobial-reststance-programme)